2: Thompson E-5 (1933-1934)1940 OQ6 Lau OQ6
Kambara

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The land people of Fulanga believed they originated from a hen, according to a tale recorded on Fulanga:

> A hen had many chicks and no food. She said to the chicks, "Why don't you scratch?" The chicks who were very hungry began to scratch, and they scratched the bottom out of the land in many places. The chicks are the people of Fulanga and the land is called Vanua Seu (Scratched Land).

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On Mothe the land people are called Vuata Ivi (Fruit of the Tahitian Chestnut). The *ivi* tree is still sacred to them. To cut it down, to cut off a branch or a leaf, or to injure it in any way was formerly tabu. The fruit, however, was picked and the first fruits offered to the priest. The remainder of the crop was eaten by the people. The *sokula* (a kind of shark) was tabu to the Mothe land people. If the *sokula* is seen today the Mothe people say, "That is our shark." Informants say that the *sokula* is given offerings of kava and food. According to one story, the *sokula* became sacred to Mothe when Andi Mailangi, a woman from Taveuni, married a Mothe man and went to Mothe. The bird of the Mothe land people is the *taisini,* a large hawk.

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Namuka natives say that long before the recent settlement of Namuka by immigrants from Undu, the island was inhabited by people who had their own forefather (*tu*) in the form of a white dog. This dog had children who were the aborigines of Namuka. The group was exterminated, and later land people from Kambara settled on the island. The *mbalembale* (a large fish), is the fish of the land (*ika ni vanua*). It is called Wangga Namuka (Canoe of Namuka). Formerly, when outside the reef the Namukans would call, "Wangga Namuka" and the *mbalembale* would hear and come to receive offerings of kava, food, and wreaths. Today the Namukans are the only Lauans who have lost the art of sailing outside the reef. The following tale is told on Namuka:

> One day the people wanted something to eat with the bananas they were roasting, so a man went to dive for shellfish and was drowned. A second man went for shellfish and drowned. A third and fourth man drowned in the same way. The souls of these men entered the *mbalembale* and since that time the *mbalembale* has been the "fish of the land."

I have concluded from the above that the land people of each island possessed true totems in the form of a local species of plant or animal. The group believed in its descent from the totem which was sacred to it.

The totem was incarnated in a species of large fish called its *wangga* (canoe) and also in a species of bird which was the emblem of the group. The totem and its incarnations were sacred to the group. They were propitiated with offerings by the group and protected by tabus which forbade members of the group to kill, eat or harm them. They believed the appearance of a member of the species which incarnated a totem to be a good omen.

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Conch shells (*ndazui*) were kept in the sacred caves. When propitiated by the priest the god entered the shells. They were then blown by the priest and the blast was considered to be the voice of the god. Moto says that when he was a young man, the land people on Kambara went with the priest to a sacred cave during a drought. After they performed a kava ceremony outside the cave the priest entered and prayed. When he blew the conch shell in the cave the people know he had contacted the god.

Offerings were formerly presented at a sacred stone called Kalou, found in the hamlet site of Toka, southwest of Naivindamu on the shore of the Fulanga lagoon. It consists of an almost cylindrical block of unworked limestone, about 60 cm. high and with a diameter of 35 cm., set on a pile of stone about 30 cm. high. The natives of Naivindamu say the stone contains mana.

Near the site of Onemata on Kambara lies a block of limestone which projects about one meter out of the ground. Here the natives say a man, who is now an ancestor god, entered the stone. The place is sacred.

ANCESTOR WORSHIP

The ancestor cult was introduced into Lau by the group of immigrants who founded the chiefs' phratry. It has become the keynote of Lauan religion. The pattern of ranked clans of the upper class was reflected in a celestial hierarchy of ancestral gods. Ndengei, the snake god of Viti Levu, was the most powerful forefather, because he was the originator of the group. Then came the forefather gods of each noble clan in order of rank which was originally determined by success in warfare. The ancestor gods were war gods, the ghosts of famous warriors. They were propitiated to gain mana for enhancing social prestige, and their eventual rank in the celestial hierarchy depended upon their mana-bestowing powers as reflected in the successes and failures of their clans.

The concept of mana associated with the ancestor cult is strong in the native pattern of thought. According to this concept mana is the vital force or potency which gives superhuman significance to persons or things: to human beings, animals, plants or inanimate objects. Its presence in a person or thing is not attributed to power inherent in the thing itself but to some spiritual force lodging in it. The spiritual force is frequently one of the beings who peopled the superhuman world of the Lauans before the advent of Christianity. The most powerful of these beings were the ancestor gods.

The first-born of each noble clan was the temporary repository of the mana of the clan's ancestral forefathers. The chiefs had the strongest forefathers and the high chief was most sacred because theoretically he received mana from the most powerful ancestor gods.

The ancestor gods of each noble clan were incarnated in from one to three

10:St. Johnston G-5 (no date)1918
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Lau, just eighty years ago, were strictly forbidden, perhaps wisely in those early days, to talk about anything at all connected with their old mythology. So that as children they did not hear from their mothers the old tales that even one generation before would have been so freely told to them.

However, in those islands where no resident missionary was stationed, the rule was not so strictly enforced, and it is there that I have been able to collect some of the most interesting stories.

Stories of the gods are ethnologically the most fascinating of all, especially among a totemistic people; and the Polynesians in a general sense were ancestor-worshippers, and held sacred certain beasts, birds, and fishes, wherein dwelt their gods; although they never set up special idols to them, as the Papuan race seems to have done. The value of an old legend—when established and corroborated—for purposes of ethnological investigation is immense, but on the other hand there is always the danger that an imperfect legend may lead one very much astray by setting one's feet upon a track which proves false, and only takes one farther away the more one pursues it. An amusing instance of this occurred not long ago. I was investigating the old snake legend of Vulaga Island (an island, incidentally, on which no snakes are ever found). A man told